

ACCOUNTABILITY
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ):
UNDERSTANDING VERMONT'S ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP)

The following questions and answers are designed to address the essential elements of Vermont's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decision, to support understanding of the Baseline Accountability Reports, and to address consequences and technical assistance needs.

HOW AYP DECISIONS ARE MADE

1. What is the LEA for accountability?

For accountability purposes, the LEA is the town or union school district. LEA stands for Local Education Agency.

2. How often is an accountability decision made for schools and school districts?

The decision is made annually and is based on one year of results.

3. What elements are considered in determining whether a school or school district has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

- *Student Performance:* A Mathematics Achievement Index and a Reading Achievement Index are calculated from state assessments results of all students in tested grades. For grades 3-8 and grade 11, students are tested in the fall on the academic content that they would be expected to have mastered by the end of the previous year.
- *Student Participation:* The student participation rate is based on the number of students in the tested grades who were enrolled for the official test window for all Vermont state assessments (regular and alternate).
- *Academic Indicator:* The state designates another measure, such as graduation rate, that is closely associated with student achievement and applicable to the grade span of the school or school district.
 - For all schools containing the 9-12 grade span, it is the graduation rate.
 - For all other schools, it is the percentage of students in the bottom achievement level of NECAP Reading.

4. For which student groups must we determine AYP?

For every school, AYP must be determined for all tested students, regardless of the number of students and for any of the following groups for which there are 40 or more students in the Mathematics Achievement Index or 40 or more students in the Reading Index:

- Economically disadvantaged (free or reduced lunch) students
- Students with disabilities (IEP)
- Limited English proficient (LEP) students
- Six major racial ethnic groups

5. What is a confidence interval?

A confidence interval is the range of scores within which the school's or the school district's "true score" falls.

6. How are confidence intervals used in the AYP decisions?

A confidence interval to ensure 99 percent certainty of the school's or the school district's AYP classification is calculated around the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO), the annual target for the school or school district. If the school's or the school district's index is within the confidence interval, it is determined to have met AYP. On the AYP report, we indicate the lower confidence bound of the AMO. An index that meets this lower bound results in a school or school district meeting AYP.

7. How are Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) determined?

AMOs are calculated by grade span for schools and school districts using a formula required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA). This formula is based on the goals of 100 percent of students proficient by 2014 and schools/districts meeting specific requirements for incremental increases over the 12-year period.

- **What is "Safe Harbor"?**

"Safe Harbor" is a mechanism through which schools and school districts that do not meet the AMO are determined to have met AYP because they made significant improvement in student achievement.

In Vermont, a school or school district whose achievement index does not make the lower confidence bound of the AMO, but which does increase its achievement index or indexes by 10 percent from the previous year, has met "Safe Harbor." Meeting "Safe Harbor" means the school or school district makes AYP as long as it also meets the academic indicator for whatever AYP group of 40 or more students has had to use the "Safe Harbor" provision.

8. Besides making AYP on the achievement indexes, what other criteria must the school or school district meet?

In order to meet AYP, for the All Student group:

- It must ensure that 95 percent of students are assessed.
- It also must meet the criteria established for the applicable academic indicator.

For all other disaggregated AYP groups of 40 or more students in either achievement index:

- The 95 percent participation rate must be met.
- The academic indicator criteria must be met ONLY if the group meets AYP on its achievement index by using "Safe Harbor".

9. How many times of not making AYP does it take for a school to be identified as needing improvement?

A school or school district enters improvement if, for the All Student Group or for any other AYP Group of 40 or more students, it does not:

- Make AYP for two consecutive years in the same content area, OR
- Meet the 95 percent participation rate for two consecutive years, OR
- Meet the academic indicator for two consecutive years (as previously described).

CONSEQUENCES & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

10. What happens to schools when they don't make AYP?

The Commissioner describes in writing the actions the school must take in order to improve student achievement and to meet any applicable federal requirements. Technical assistance may also be provided.

11. What happens to an LEA that doesn't make AYP?

If an LEA does not make AYP for two consecutive years, it is identified and must develop a plan that addresses the areas that caused it to be identified.

12. Does what happens change when schools don't make AYP again?

Yes, the required actions and technical assistance change over time in response to changing information about student achievement and the implementation of previous year's required actions. For Title I schools, there is more specificity in the consequences.

13. What does it mean to be a Title I school?

A Title I school is a school that receives funding from Title I, Part A, of NCLBA. This money is distributed by Supervisory Unions/Districts and is used to provide additional services to those students not meeting the standards or at greatest risk of not meeting the standards.

14. Why are there different consequences for Title I and non-Title I schools?

Although NCLBA requires that states assess all students in all schools and have an accountability system with consequences for all schools, it only mandates a particular set of consequences for those schools receiving Title I funds.

15. Which schools or students get school choice?

Choice affects only Title I schools. Additionally, there must be a school of comparable grade span to which student can be transferred within the district. Within schools, all students are eligible for choice but priority can be established, as necessary.

16. Which schools or students get supplemental services?

Supplemental services are available only to low-income students in Title I schools when the school is in Year 2 School Improvement. Again, priority goes to the lowest achieving students from the population of low-income students.

17. What technical assistance do schools get?

Schools receive technical assistance related to the reasons that they did not make AYP and based on their need and capacity.

18. Is it fair to hold all students, including those with disabilities, to the same target/expectations?

Federal law requires that all students be held to the same standards and expectations (AYP targets). Only 1 percent or less of students can be held to alternate standards (non-grade level). The results from the Alternate Assessments taken by those students are included at full value in the accountability system.

19. What can schools do about issues out of their control, like poverty, etc.?

There is a particular set of school characteristics that produce high student achievement, even for low-income students. All characteristics are interconnected and interrelated. Successful schools are successful systems. Effective systems:

- Believe all students can succeed;
- Take responsibility for students' achievement and therefore work to continually improve their own practice;
- Are guided by strong leadership;
- Use data in an ongoing way to provide feedback to staff as well as monitor and support students;
- Establish a professional teaching culture that supports high-quality instruction;
- Have a comprehensive and highly functioning support system in place to address students' academic, emotional, behavioral and social needs;
- Create a supportive climate that makes all students, as well as adults, feel valued and safe; and
- Build constructive relationships with families and involve them in their child's learning.

See "[Roots of Success: Effective Practices in Vermont Schools](#)"